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AUTHOR Anderson, Marti; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the structure and activities of the Windham Partnership for Teacher Education, a collaborative of four rural Vermont elementary professional development schools (PDSs), a high school PDS, and the School for International Training graduate program in foreign language teacher education. Three integrated activities are at the core of the program. In the first activity, foreign language instruction and multicultural education, preservice teachers use authentic materials and study and apply varied foreign language pedagogical principles. In the second activity, Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) students work as classroom interns for one year. During weekly seminars, they examine and reflect on their teaching experience. The third element of the program is professional development of inservice teachers who serve as mentors for the interns. Mentors meet in biweekly, two-credit mentoring seminars to explore issues associated with learning to teach and developing mentoring skills. Mentors' words are used to illustrate the four major areas where they had moved beyond previously felt or held boundaries: level of self-reflection, levels of professional dialogue with colleagues, boundary between high school and elementary teachers, and shift in professional roles. (IAH)

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The Reflective Mentoring Seminar: Providing a Means For Teachers to Cross Boundaries in a Professional Development School

Paper prepared for the 1995 AERA Conference in San Francisco

by Marti Anderson
School for International Training

Katherine Boles
Harvard University / Brookline, MA Public Schools

and

Judith Abascal
Margaret Dale Barand
Linda Bourne
Jennifer Brown
Margaret Brown Cassidy
David Holzapfel

Teachers at the Brattleboro Union High School and the Public Schools of Putney, Dummerston, Guilford and Marlboro, Vermont

1995

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The Reflective Mentoring Seminar: Providing a Means For Teachers to Cross Boundaries in a Professional Development School

by Marti Anderson, Katherine Boles and Judith Abascal, Margaret Dale Barand, Linda Bourne, Jennifer Brown, Margaret Brown Cassidy

Introduction:

Professional Development Schools, collaborative institutions designed to reform teaching and teacher education, have burgeoned in the last few years. Almost daily new collaboratives are formed and existing partnerships are expanded. Over 100 such partnerships have developed over the last few years (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Such Partnerships reflect national concerns to evolve new educational structures which can serve diverse needs and can involve teachers, teacher educators, parents and school administrators collaboratively in the improvement of education.

Many collaboratives struggle in their initial years as constituents of the two dissimilar institutions work to create a new institution that meets the needs of both parent organizations, respects the goals and mission of the parent orgnizations, but pushes those institutions to dramatically improve on many levels. As John Goodlad stated many years ago, the collaboration of the college and the school should pry loose the calcified programs of both institutions so that new ideas and ways of working can flourish (Goodlad, 1987).

Many college/school partnerships do not succeed in changing either parent. They become another means to prepare student teachers to teach in classrooms using the old methods, with lipservice being given to collaboration. Others, though, are in the process of significantly altering the college and the school. In most successful PDSs individuals work from mutual self-interest and common goals, demonstrate mutual trust and respect, share decision-making, have a clear focus and a manageable agenda, have commitment from top leadership, fiscal support, long-term commitment, and a dynamic nature (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

An increasing phenomenon in Professional Development Schools is the appearance of individuals from one institution working on some basis in or with the other institution. This phenomenon opens new avenues for

growth for both individuals, permits previously impermeable boundaries of institutions to become more permeable, increases each institution's understanding of the other. The experience of boundary spanners has not been studied to any great extent. Mention is made of collaboration, but little is said about the experience of people who assume new roles at the other institution and how this affects the institutions and the individuals.

This paper will explore a collaborative, founded in 1991, of four rural Vermont elementary schools, a union high school and a graduate degree program in foreign language training. In this collaborative, teachers at both the college and the school have spanned boundaries in unique ways. Our paper will document the experience of these boundary spanners in order to understand whether the presence in the collaboration of individuals who understand the cultures and structure, the mission and goal of both insitutions, and who play roles in both institutions makes a difference in the institution and in the lives of the boundary spanners and other individuals at the institution.

The Context for the Professional Development School:

There is growing recognition that teacher education programs and K-12 schools must come together in new ways to create more effective forms of classroom education and prepare teachers in better and more efficient ways (Holmes Group, 1986). For too long schools and colleges have eyed each other suspiciously across the chasm between theory and practice: the school regarding the college as the "ivory tower" where not much that was usable was ever discussed; the college assuming that the school was a place where the level of conversation was rarely raised above the mundanely practical. The creation of a new institution -- the Professional Development School (PDS) -- promises to interrupt this cycle and enable the school and college to examine and alter the cultural patterns of both institutions (Goodlad,1987).

The goals of Professional Development Schools are to improve the education of children, enhance the professional development of preservice and inservice teachers, and to reform the college and the school (Levine, 1992). In the PDS, teachers' and college faculty's roles are expanded and their responsibilities increased. The PDS recognizes the unique perspective of both the college faculty member and the classroom practitioner and provides a forum for both groups to articulate their knowledge of the teaching craft;

theory and practice come together in new and exciting ways. (Boles, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1994).

When the Professional Development School is developed, however, the traditional hierarchical nature of the two parent institutions is disrupted and authority patterns and power relationships are inevitably altered (Sarason, 1971). This makes the success of this new cultural entity a complicated phenomenon. Recent studies have demonstrated the complexity of the PDS experience (Levine and Trachtman, 1994). New roles are often ill-defined and misunderstood by administrators and faculty members, and efforts to establish the PDS are frequently greeted with resistance and resentment.

The emergence of boundary-spanning individuals seems to increase the likelihood of program success. In each of these collaborations individuals from the college and individuals from the school have successfully crossed boundaries; either because they graduated from that institution; have developed an on-going relationship with faculty members; have become insiders in the other institution; have taught courses and are considered at member of both faculties and at least a respected peripheral individual at both institutions. This phenomenon seems to successfully have broken the cycle of distrust and misunderstanding so evident in developing collaboratives.

If Professional Development Schools are to be vehicles for changing and improving schools, colleges and the teaching career (Little, 1986), it will be important to study the experience of teachers and college faculty currently involved in successful PDS experiments.

Methods and Data Source

This paper is based on large group interview data collected from six teachers in the Windham Partnership and individual interviews with three faculty members at the School for International Training. The process for preparing this paper included a meeting of interested mentors in which they discussed the question, "What boundaries do you span or cross over in your involvement in the Windham Partnership?" Their discussion was transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes.

The Context of the Partnership

The Windham Partnership for Teacher Education is a public school/graduate school collaboration which aims to strengthen foreign language insturction for children and to involve classroom teachers in educating future teachers. The Windham Partnership for Teacher Education involves three integrated activities:

- *Foreign-Language Instruction and Multicultural Education*

The Partnership provides regular foreign-language instruction to children in grades 1-8 in Putney, Marlboro, Guilford and Dummerston Vermont and enhances the foreign-language instruction presently available at Brattleboro Union High School. The study of foreign language and culture is a critical way to connect children in these rural communities to the wider world.

- *Teacher Education*

Through year-long pre-service experience, MAT students from the School for International Training work as interns in Windham Partnership classrooms, obtain an in-depth understanding of life in particular schools, and have the opportunity to develop an extended professional relationship with experienced classroom teachers. The combined nature of their classroom teaching and graduate coursework prepares these novice teachers to meet the increasing challenge of teaching in today's public schools.

- *Professional Development*

Throughout the school year, teachers in Partnership classrooms engage in the mentoring of apprentices. The activity of year-long mentoring enriches the classroom teacher' work, enables teachers to articulate their practice more effectively, and eliminates the professional isolation so often raised as a problem with teaching. All these aspects enhance the teachers' professional growth.

The Program Structure

The program has three interconnected levels of activity:

•The graduate student interns' *on-going classroom experience,* supported by mentoring from experienced teachers:

•The *weekly Partnership Seminar* providing a forum for graduate student interns to examine and reflect on their teaching experience. A regular feature of these seminars are plenary meetings in which interns and mentors meet to discuss issues and learn together ;

•The*Mentoring Seminar* that meets every other week. In it Mentor teachers explore issues in the learning of teaching and skills in mentoring beginning teachers.

History of the Partnership

After a full year of meetings and planning, nine graduate student interns from the School for International Training were placed at two elementary schools – Putney Central and Marlboro Elementary Schools – and at Brattleboro Union High School in the fall of 1992. Eight mentor teachers volunteered to participate in the Partnership from these schools: five– representing the entire Foreign Language Department from BUHS, two from Marlboro, and one from Putney.

Prior to the Partnership's second year it received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanitities to pay the program's coordinator; to give teachers stipends for their work; and to provide regular professional development for the mentors. The School for International Training provided matching support.

In 1993 the Guilford Elementary School joined the Partnership and in 1994 the Dummerston Elementary School and the Brattleboro Area Middle School became partners.

There are currently 12 interns in the schools: five at Brattleboro Union High School; one at the Brattleboro Area Middle School; two in Guilford Elemenentary School; two in Marlboro Elementary School; one at Putney Central School and one at the Dummerston Elementary School.

Structure of the SIT Interns' Year:

In the program, all the interns, whether in the elementary schools or the high school, follow the same basic schedule which conforms to the basic one-year structure of the MAT Program. Interns' activities and level of involvment vary according to trimester.

The Fall Term:

During the last week of August the interns take a preparatory course at SIT. Then During the first week of September, the interns visit and observe mentor teachers classes and meet with them at the close of the school day. Following this initial period of observation and mutual assessment, mentors and interns are paired. During this term, interns teach classes once or twice a week in their schools and attend a weekly in-school seminar held at Brattleboro Union High School which is co-taught by a graduate faculty member and a foreign language teacher from the high school.

The Winter Term:

Beginning in January, the interns teach on a daily basis in their schools. Those at the elementary level teach regularly in their assigned classrooms. Beyond their teaching, interns assume general duties in the school to develop a deeper understanding of its operation and culture. They continue to take part in the in-school seminar which now addressses specific teaching issues related to their intensive work in classrooms. They are supervised while teaching by their mentor teacher.

The Spring Term

In mid-March, the schedule reverts to one like the fall, with the interns teaching once or twice a week and attending the weekly seminar. The substance of the interns' work is quite different, however. Their increased knowledge of school organization and culture, their position as established members of the school community, and their ongoing relationships with many children and teachers, enable them, at the elementary level, to create lessons that are more relevant and meaningful for the children they teach, and, at the high school level, to develop long-term projects that meet the particular needs of the students in the mentor teachers classrooms.

The Program Context at the School for International Training

In preparing graduate students to teach foreign languages, SIT's MAT Program draws on current developments in both the field of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and foreign languages. Graduate students in the MAT program are engaged in studying and applying developments in foreign language pedagogy from a variety of sources.

As foreign language teaching in the US moves beyond the traditional structural syllabus, students are introduced to a range of syllabi, including situational, notional-functional, theme-based, and task-based. Students at MAT study conventional approaches to language teaching, such as the Audio Lingual Method, but they also spend considerable time mastering the principles and becoming familiar with the practices and procedures of methodologies such as the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, and the Natural Approach. These approaches share a number of pedagogical principles, currently prominent in foreign language teaching, which the MAT program asks its students to consider and which are modelled in the ways in which the program is designed and implemented. Principles include learner-centeredness, attention to emotions and the affective domain in learning, emphasizing communicative competence as a primary goal of second language teaching, and learning how to direct one's own learning and professional development.

Students in the program gain experience in using authentic materials, such as videos, newspaper, realia, radio broadcasts, in the foreign language classroom. In the MAT program students go well beyond the grammatical, sentence-level dimension of language to consider its structure, use and pragmatics.

The Program in the Schools

Often the content of teacher education programs does not fit within the structures and day-to-day demands of the public school. A major aim of the Partnership has been to bridge those two worlds. At the Brattleboro Union High School, the interns fit their instruction, based on the tools outlined above, into the existing departmental goals of the foreign langauge program which focuses on students' cognitive and affective development. The BUHS foreign language curriculum is designed to encourage and enable students to develop:

- global awareness and an appreciation of cultural differences and an awareness of human interdependence, both on a global level and within the classroom setting;
- an awareness of the function and importance of the target language, which also enhances their knoweldge and appreciaiton of their native langauge;
- communication competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the target language, and work toward mastery of these skills;
- positive self-images as language learners, a feeling of pride in their achievements, and an appreciation for the achievements of others;
- learning skills and a sense of responsibility for their own learning, as well as critical thinking and creativity;
- awareness of language study's value for its own sake, for its role in other disciplines and as a marketable skill.

Most foreign language courses at BUHS are not text-based per se; instead, teachers choose and develop materials which help students develop language proficiency, working for example with menus, timetables, advertising and other "realia," as well as films and readings, to help students improve their speaking, reading listening and writing skills Teachers also create original instructional materials to address the needs and interests of their students, and a few courses do use textbooks in addition to these materials. The school environment is open to innovation and experimentation, encouraging teachers to evolve their own pedagogical approaches and materials to support thenm

Within this environment the interns co-plan and co-teach classes with their mentor teachers. At times, the interns will plan and teach a lesson or unit, while the mentor observes and critiques the intern's work. Mentors and interns have regular meetings to discuss and plan classes, and interns participate in departmental and school activities, from teachers meetings to parent teacher conferences.

Interns at the elementary level primarily use a situation-based curriculum. French and Spanish are being taught in the elementary schools. Instructional content includes a basic grammatical sequence with simple vocabulary to describe colors, shapes, days of the week, months of the year, weather, animals countries, meals, food and the family, etc. This language is

embedded in classroom langauge, games, projects, dialogues, and roleplays. At the elementary level, partner teachers have also integrated their instruction into on-going social studies units such as the National Geographic Society's Voyage of the Mimi in which anthropologists visit the Yucatan, to teach related Spanish vocabulary.

The Mentors' Experience

The mentor teachers in the partnership are directly involved in fostering the development of classroom-based knowledge and skills in these new teachers. They assist the interns in all aspects of the life of the classroom practitioner; they provide them with an understanding of the culture of the school, with guidance in classroom management, and with assistance in curriculum and planning, as well as peer observation and coaching.

During the first year of the Partnership, recognizing that there were specific skills and techniques of mentoring, the Partnership organized a year-long course for participating teachers to examine the learning of teaching, enhance their mentoring skills, and to enable them to supervise their graduate student partners more effectively. The course, for which the mentor teachers earned graduate credit through the School for International Training, was taught by an SIT faculty member.

A new mentoring course was introduced during the second year of the Partnership. This course changed the focus from how to mentor pre-service teachers to a focus on how veteran teachers couldexamine their own practice. This course, now in its second year, has become a pivotal piece in the Partnership. The course has been renamed the Reflective Mentoring Seminar and though it touches on the skills teachers will need to mentor, such as observation and feedback, its primary focus is the examination of each mentor's teaching practice.

Mentors meet every two weeks on the campus of the School for International Training. Though the course is officially taught by a college faculty member, the role of this individual has primarily been to establish the structure for the course, to set the parameters and guidelines and to allow the mentors to present their own work to each other.

At each session two mentors make individual presentations of their work. They describe an event, show a video clip, present a case study from

their classrooms. Each mentor has one hour to make her/his presentation and listen to feedback from the other mentors. The purpose of these presentations is not for the group to solve the problems of the individual teacher. The purpose is not to "fix" a problem, but to enable the presenting teacher (and the other teachers in the group) to develop a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

The key to the success of this course has been that the mentors are in charge of it. They choose the aspects they wish to bring to the group for analysis. They lead the discussions.

The sessions have had a profound effect on the teachers. Working together in this way seems to have eliminated the "conspiracy of certainty" (McDonald, p. 2) which has in the past often prevented teachers from openly discussing their work. For the first time in their careers these veteran teachers are discussing their own uncertainty in the face of the complex problems of teaching; they are recognizing the commonalities across boundaries; they are seeing how similar high school teaching is to elementary teaching; and they are discovering that teachers from different levels have much to say to each other. As the Partnership's coordinator remarked,

> This course has enabled us to dismantle the conspiracy. Teachers have a certain fear and a need for self-protection. This sharing of issues, and the recognition of commonalities has made people realize that everyone deals with the same issues. It has empowered the teachers -- freed them up to act powerfully.

The connections provided by the group, and the cross-fertilization of ideas and issues, has, in a very profound way, empowered the teachers to think differently about the work they do.

The Intent of This Study

The original intent this study was to explore the importance of individual faculty in a college-school partnership who assume roles which span the boundary between their "usual" role in whichever school/institution they come from and the "other" institution of the PDS. Using this definition, boundary spanning implies a situation where certain individuals begin to move beyond their usual institutional roles into the other institution (be it the college or a participating school). While we

understood the importance of these boundary-spanning roles, we found that this was not, in fact, what occurred in this particular partnership for most of the participants.

While two of the mentor teachers and the partnership director did, in fact, come closer to this boundary-spanning role, none of the mentors felt that this was particularly critical to their experience in the partnership. Rather, they cited numerous other aspects of their partnership involvement that were far more important to them and to their professional development. Since professional development for these in-service teachers is one of three overarching goals for the Windham Partnership, it made sense to focus on the actual reported experience of these teachers and the areas where they felt that they had spanned certain boundaries.

What follows is a report and analysis of where the mentor teachers themselves feel they have grown or spanned existing boundaries in their professional practice. We have chosen to use the mentor's own words as much as possible, letting them speak for themselves.

We have identified 4 major areas where mentors felt that they had moved beyond previously felt/held boundaries:

- level of self-reflection;
- levels of professional dialogue with colleagues;
- boundary between high school and elementary teachers;
- shift in professional roles.

In each area we give a brief statement of what is included/involved in this area, followed by the mentor's own words regarding the subject and, closing with our analysis of the area.

Self-Reflection

While the value of reflection on teaching practice has been much-discussed (e.g. Schon, 1983 , Richards and Lockhart, 1994), it is clear that for most classroom teachers finding the time, structure and motivation to be involved in such reflection has been difficult, if not impossible. Through the Reflective Mentoring seminar, a 2-credit course which is a requirement of the mentors for involvement in the partnership, the mentors have overcome

many of the barriers to reflection and have become engaged in a process which they report to be unquestionably useful.

The first such barrier, developing a reflective structure which would be relevant to the mentor teachers and thus would be a support to their work, was surmounted by involving the mentors in the design and structure of their seminar. One high school mentor discussed the freedom she felt by being a part of a learning environment.

> Part of it is that I feel much more like a learner now. I am free to be a learner. I am in a seminar so it's all crisp. It liberates me to step back and back and to look at my teaching in a different way.

An elementary mentor compared the Reflective Mentoring seminar with other faculty groups she had attended.

> What I am aware of is that this experience is really promoting growth whereas the curriculum assessment group (another faculty group) doesn't want to question anything. Some of it is the shared commitment and some of it is examination of oneself in the boundary of trying to find where I was as a beginning teacher and to meditate, really reflect on things before charging through.

One of the elementary mentors talked about how discussing his teaching practice with his less-experienced interns affected his process of self-reflection.

> We're able to compare notes and check in with each other throughout the day. This benefits both of us. When it works well, the intern's fresh view helps me remember what the beginners' eyes see clearly; thus challenging and rejuvenating my vision.

Another elementary mentor said:

> There is a real gap in terms of world view between me and my intern. I am now someone who is in their 26th year of teaching and he is in a very different place. . . I feel I am really pushed to go deeper in myself to examine where I am coming from and how does it connect.

A high school mentor examined how reflection with her intern affected her teaching practice.

> It changes your teaching because you look far more critically at what you do because you have to explain it to the other person, whereas when you are a cooperating teacher, they ask very few questions about what you do.

An elementary mentor spoke more specifically about how reflection with her intern helped to alleviate the isolation of the typical teaching context.

> There is always that other pair of eyes right there beside you, reflecting with you. I have never reflected with anyone. I could evaluate myself and tell myself all kinds of grand things. Who knows if they're true or not? But when there is another pair of eyes from a 20-year distance, I think that is real important.

It would seem that by having a structure, time and reason to come together, coupled with a new kind of relationship with their interns, the mentor teachers find that they are reflecting perhaps more and most certainly in different ways.

But, structures and time are not enough if there is not an underlying sense of trust and collaboration between those who come together to reflect. Many of the mentors talked about the importance of their shared commitment to the partnership and its goals of pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher education and support and second-language instruction for partnership students. These goals have provided a source of strong motivation. The mentors discussed how they feel they have been changed by the seminar because of this trust and motivation. A high school mentor summarizes the fundamental difference in the discussions that take place as part of the partnership.

> We talk about the things that matter. We talk about why we do what we do, we talk about the assumptions underlying what learning is and what kids are there in school for - what we're in school for - to help kids do all that stuff.

Another high school mentor offers her perceptions of how talking about her teaching with colleagues has, in fact, altered her teaching practice.

> I think the seminar has changed what I do. . . I think with every conversation we have I pick a piece out and I think that is something I

> want to think more about, or damn I have been thinking about that and by God I'm going to do it, or Yeah I have been doing the right thing all along, I just need to do it with more conviction. It's an accumulation of small things that I might already be on my way to doing, but are fed - it's like the engine is fed or stroking the engine so I could go faster or slow down.

One of the elementary mentors describes her experience in the Reflective Mentoring seminar.

> (This is) so different from taking a course. This is different in that you get recharged every time you come to a session but it's not recharged to be better at teaching science - it's really recharged to better at how you view your own teaching and how you view what you do effecting kids.

A high school mentor added:

> (I feel empowered by this experience because) it's given me an opportunity to reflect on how I feel about things and really come to terms with actually defining ideas that were floating around up there and that I really hadn't solidified.

Two high school mentors shared their sense that there is a level of trust because of individual mentors choosing their own involvement in the seminar, rather than having the seminar imposed on them. The first mentor stated:

> There is a little natural selection, self-selection that people who would take on this kind of internship responsibility and the seminar, who are drawn to the seminar which says "reflective mentoring" are people who have the bent of wanting to look at their own teaching and wanting to do the kind of professional "parenting" (that is involved).

Another high school mentor commented:

> We are all in this with an agreed upon agenda of professional development with a clear understanding that we still have individual control of that professional development.

Finally, a high school mentor referred to the non-competitive and supportive environment which is a part of the partnership as a whole and of their Reflective Mentoring seminar.

> There is just a commitment to one another - throughout the whole mentor workshop - A real genuine trying to understand some of the issues and problems other people are facing and a recognition that those are the same issues that you are facing, but it's a very different perspective than attending another meeting -- here it's personalities and really reaching out to understand someone else's situations and that never happens in a course or another meeting.

All of these factors contributed to the mentors' experience of becoming better prepared for the rigor of disciplined self-reflection. While self-reflection in and of itself seems to benefit teachers, reflection conducted with peers serves the additional function of increased dialogue with colleagues, in general, and, more specifically, increased depth of dialogue with these other teachers. For at least one elementary mentor, working with her colleagues in this way served to heighten her awareness of the "others" in the teaching profession.

> I feel I carry some kind of picture of the other schools and the other mentors. That I am connected to the others, not so much their boundaries, but spheres that I - like a glass ornament - see the image of the other schools that have mentors, and incredibly a much richer understanding of what is going on in high school than I ever did when my kids were at the high school.

As the awareness of these other teachers has grown so the levels of dialogue with each other have also grown. This is the next significant area of boundary crossing which we have observed. To state it in individual terms, this is the boundary between one teacher and her/his teaching practice and another teacher and her/his practice.

Levels of Dialogue:

A high school mentor captures the essence of the mentors' collective sense that it is rare and unusual to talk in the manner that the partnership's Reflective Mentoring seminar has fostered.

> On the one hand, I realize how rarely I have the kind of conversation that matters. On the other hand it makes me seek it out and it makes me recognize it when I see it.

An elementary mentor responds to the question, "What boundaries are you crossing in your partnership work?"

> I think the word boundary often implies a separation and what I am feeling is more of a connection. It's also really underscored how few important conversations I have with my colleagues within my own schools. The things I care about in education we never get around to talking about, and that is very sad.

A high school mentor adds to this by describing her feelings of greater levels of connection with her colleagues of 20 + years.

> What is very different for me . . . is feeling so connected to other teachers, to my colleagues in the language department. We're connected in a different way - we have always worked together closely with curriculum and issues in the school. But I think exploring what we do and the way we do with elementary teachers give us a whole layer of philosophical understanding to what we do and we discover these tremendous points of commonalty. . . I realize how connected we can be, not are, cause we often are not, but can or could be.

One elementary mentor addresses the value of important dialogue with teachers from a different grade level and subject area.

> I still remember the very first day that I came and you said to me, "You are going to love this group because you are going to feel supported" and that has been so true. Instead it has opened up to me possibilities of relationships with people I never would have before, because I am not a foreign language teacher and so that is always exciting to me and I don't always have to be a kindergarten teacher. That I can be something more than what I really was.

If the level of dialogue with their peer colleagues was powerful, the dialogue with their intern colleagues was just as much a catalyst. Several of the mentors talked about the value of this level of dialogue. A high school mentor who also co-taught the Partnership Seminar for the MAT students this year comments:

> I get supercharged and I walk into that seminar and just listen these people, their ideas and their enthusiasm. It is just infectious.

A high school mentor describes how dialogue and experience with her intern has helped her to see her institution in new ways.

> I have been struck by my intern's reaction to my institution and I think that this kind of sure relationship in the kind of mentor partner relationship as opposed to the cooperating teacher makes me see my institution more clearly through her eyes. When she bumps up against it, I bump up against it. It's not just because she is young and a student teacher. She is a colleague and when she bumps up against it, I have a stake in that too. It also has implications for my continued teaching because it makes me a little more vigilant not just to accept things because that is the way they are.

An elementary mentor focuses on the nature of the relationship that develops between him and his intern.

> Aside from the more formal aspects of mentoring, observation and evaluation, there is an educational intimacy which develops between us as a result of working on a day to day basis during the intensive period with the same group of students on the process of education. We're able to compare notes and check in with each other throughout the day. This benefits both of us.

Again, the issue of isolation is addressed as this high school mentordescribes how working with others -- having "another pair of eyes" -- alters the experience of teaching.

> We are not so alone. Lots of times I cannot remember whether it was somebody in the seminar from another school or somebody in my department or my intern who brought up a question to me or made an observation that I am now chewing on. All these groups of people are co-equal and are feeding in on the same level at the same time.

Finally, the mentors report a shift in the level of dialogue with the involved MAT-SIT faculty. The high school mentor who is co-teaching the Partnership Seminar remarks:

> That's an interesting experience. He (the MAT faculty person) has experience in these schools -- he is coming from the perspective of the institution, so it's interesting because he is looking at things from the theoretical perspective of course work and then I am taking it and we are looking at it from the trenches of the classroom and how the ideas can be, in many case, adapted.

Others expressed surprise that the relationships between the Windham Partnership faculty and MAT faculty had not changed substantively. A high school mentor who was once a MAT student herself and has had years of experience with the MAT program as a cooperating teacher said:

> I actually feel that my relationship with the program has changed less than I thought it might. Certainly my professional relationship with Kitty, Donald, Marti and Carol is multi-dimensional and important, but not the MAT program itself.

Another added her perception that the partnership has, in fact, a lower status in the MAT program as a whole.

> I still have this feeling that the partnership is a little bit of a step-child and I think that's what I don't feel like it's been made an integral part of the program.

This comment and others provides us with food for thought in terms of how SIT/MAT might work in the future to expand and support these partnership relationships.

When discussing what in the Windham Partnership structure allowed for increased quality and quantity of dialogue, an elementary mentor responded as follows:

> We need a vehicle like (the Reflective Mentoring seminar) for this to happen. I don't think we would go back (without the partnership) and have the connection maintained.

As the group probed into the specifics of what allowed them to work together so effectively, the non-competitive environment of the partnership as a whole figured prominently in the discussion. A high school mentor stated a perspective on the environment of the Reflective Mentoring seminar:

> There is just a commitment to one another throughout the whole mentor workshop. There's a real genuine trying to understand some of the issues and problems other people are facing and a recognition that those are the same issues that you are facing, but it's a very different perspective than attending another meeting. Here it's personalities and really reaching out to understand someone else's situations and that never happens in a course or other meetings.

An elementary mentor also compared the seminar to other meetings she's required to attend:

> In here there is a desire to a different kind of achievement. You want to do the very best for the intern, they also want to do the best they can amongst us. We want to do a lot for each other. (Unlike other meetings or committees) - I clearly get a sense from everyone that is involved in this partnership that they really care about their kids and really want whatever we can do to make life better for students and for kids and for ourselves. That is such a difference.

What remains to be learned is why this environment has this feeling of support and non-competitiveness. While we believe that the structure of the reflective mentoring seminar and the partnership as a whole have contributed to this, we also believe that there is a certain good will at play here that the partnership has merely supported, not created. Worth pursuing is the question of what, exactly, is involved in the creation of such an environment.

Reduction of the high school / elementary school boundary.

Traditionally, public high school and elementary school teachers haven't had much to do with each other. Each institution has evolved in different ways. Traditional wisdom indicates that elementary school teachers tend to focus more on the learners while high school teachers tend to focus more on the content. While this difference of focus is not insurmountable, coupled with a lack of time for these teachers to come together, each group typically stays locked in its own focus.

Bringing these two groups together has been one of the most instructive aspects of the partnership for all parties. Mentors report that their perspective has shifted, that they are able to draw from the wisdom of their high school or elementary counterparts in the ongoing task of making sense of their own teaching contexts. Building on the relationships they have established with each other, they are able to see the investment that one group has in the other and use this knowledge to help fuel their efforts in making learning more viable for their students. The mentors have a great deal to say on this topic.

A high school mentor comments on her experience of connecting with elementary teachers:

> We're connected in a different way - we have always worked together closely with curriculum and issues in our own school. But I think exploring what we do and the way we do with elementary teachers give us a whole layer of philosophical understanding to what we do and we discover these tremendous points of commonality.

This same mentor describes how working with the elementary teachers has helped the high school teachers' process of curriculum redesign.

> The commonalties that we find with elementary teaching has fed our curriculum change (a massive restructuring of the curriculum which has just taken place in the last year). We are interested in engaging the whole student and giving initiative and responsibility to the student in the same way the elementary teachers do and are interested in doing.

She sees that there is strong validation for each other's wisdom in teaching in their own contexts.

> It (the discussions held together) validates them (our ideas) as people validate our approach. We find that we scratch a little below the surface and we find we have a lot in common. We are all asking the same kinds of questions and coming up with the same kinds of answers.

Again, several mentors commented on how the structure of the partnership and the Reflective Mentoring seminar supported the connections between elementary and high school teachers. A high school mentor described her perceptions of linkages between the partnership and the restructuring of the high school's foreign language curriculum.

> I think the Windham Partnership has been immensely helpful in feeding the energy of our curriculum change process. I don't think the curriculum change process came out of the partnership because it started long before we had it. But the partnership has definitely fed it.

Another high school mentor agreed with this perception:

> The commonalties that we find with elementary teaching has fed our curriculum change. When we hear elementary teachers saying what they do with their students and how they work to engage their students

> in various kinds of learning confirms the direction that we are going. We say, ' Yeah, we don't have to be stuck in that high school thing of giving the worksheet, then give the test.'. . But we are interested in engaging the whole student and giving initiative and responsibility to the student in the same way the elementary teachers do and are interested in doing. We say, 'Shoot, if they can do it in 5th and 6th grade and in 1st grade, I think high school students can handle it too.'

Yet another high school mentor commented on how a visit to one of the elementary schools changed her view of what she could be doing in her classrooms.

> I think something happened to me when I went out to visit Putney Elementary last year. I could glom onto so many good ideas that were being done in the first and second grades and at the 7th and 8th grades that could feed into what we do. That was a gigantic leap and this is so important. I saw those connections from the elementary to the high school.

While it was the high school mentors who seemed particular struck by the similarities between elementary and high school learners, an elementary mentor was quoted by a high school mentor:

> He has commented on it a couple of times. "Isn't it funny how high school is becoming more like elementary school?" He commented on how the room where the Partnership Seminar meets (the home room of one of the high school mentors) looks like an elementary school, whereas the rest of the school looks like a jail. Nothing on the walls in the rest of the school and that our rooms are bright and have student work up.

Finally, commentary in this area demonstrates how relationships formed and sustained in other areas of the partnership play out in a positive way between elementary and high school teachers. The following quote which has been included previously takes on a new meaning when considered in light of the relationships between the elementary and high school mentors.

> I feel a stake in Guilford (elementary school) that I never felt before. (This teacher is a high school mentor.) Going into the building, seeing the kids sitting in the back of the classroom, working with the interns.

> It's different. . . I realize how connected we can be, not are, cause we often are not, but can / could be.

This same high mentor comments on a level of interest she has developed toward another partnership school:

> With Marlboro (elementary school) I've had no formal role, it's just that they are part of the partnership. But, I have started reading the school board news from Marlboro with a different eye.

She goes on to describe a specific moment where she realized what close affinity she could have with the elementary mentors and how much they could learn from one another.

> I think exploring what we do and the way we do with elementary teachers gives us a whole layer of philosophical understanding to what we do. I just could not believe it when (an elementary mentor) described her classroom management situations. It was as though she had reached into my mind and was speaking to my dilemma with five students of the last two days before that seminar. Everything that applied to her as an elementary teacher applied to me. It was like a gift.

Expanding and shifting roles -- The boundaries of a classroom teacher are ceasing to exist.

One cannot over-emphasize the importance for long-time classroom teachers of realizing a new level of professionalism through becoming responsible for the professional development of pre-service teachers. All of the mentors had previously been in the "cooperating teacher" role. One mentor described it as such,

> You give up your precious class to someone you don't know. The supervisor comes from the university to watch and give feedback, paying no attention to you. Once the intern leaves, you are left to mop up, pick up the pieces and hope you can salvage some learning for the students.

This scenario has played out many times over, leaving the cooperating teacher in a powerless and inspiration-less role. The partnership has consciously worked to change that dynamic by placing these experienced classroom teachers in a position of responsibility and support for these

interns. The mentors have reacted positively to this additional and challenging role. The high school mentor quoted above had a positive reaction to the shift in roles.

> We all jumped over the boundary between cooperating teacher and supervisor and landed solidly on the other side and it is very different. It is a different level of responsibility for helping that person to develop and have a good experience and having the responsibility for the whole of their development rather than just to make sure they don't make any big boo-boos with your classes. . . It changes your teaching because you look far more critically at what you do because you have to explain it to the other person, whereas when you are a cooperating teacher, they ask very few questions about what you do.

Another high school mentor offers some of her rationale behind choosing to make this role shift.

> We are veteran teachers and we enjoy that - but there is another kind of passing on of knowledge and skill that we could be doing and we are here (in the partnership) because we seek that out and we enjoy doing it.

This same mentor, again, examines how her relationship with her intern causes her to take a more critical role regarding her institution.

> I think that this kind of mentor /partner relationship as opposed to the cooperating teacher makes me see my institution more clearly through her eyes. . . It also has implications for my continued teaching because it makes me a little more vigilant not just to accept things because that is the way they are.

Sometimes the shifting roles create conflict within the mentors' schools and with other school-based colleagues. In some respects many of them are ambivalent about what taking on new roles may mean. This high school mentor describes her sense of how others in her school might perceive her:

> Sometimes I sense within the building that people don't really get it - who these people are - who are our shadows - because we go everywhere together. We've got Velcro at the waist. We march along in tandem, blathering in French, which is important to me and I

> wouldn't give it up because it's a great resource to be able to speak that much French. But it can seem exclusive.

An alternative view comes from an elementary mentor .

> That doesn't really happen at the elementary schools. . .Sometimes we (the interns and other mentor) will eat together at my table so we've withdrawn from some faculty things, although I am not missing anything by not being in the teachers' room. . . But I don't think it (the partnership) is looked at in quite the same way it would be at the high school. . . So many people get something from it here.

Finally, however, regardless of what "other" faculty at their institutions might think, mentors expressed an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the partnership experience. A high school mentor expressed how fortunate she felt to be a part of the partnership, despite the extra work and commitment this work requires:

> Right now I feel like a 'have' and I look at people who have the regular cooperating teacher relationships as the 'have nots'. They might not feel that way, but I feel that they don't get the support we do. There are not the same expectations for the mentor and intern. I don't think that those people are looking to learn much from their interns.

An elementary mentor saw how the partnership helped her cope with the realities of working in her school district.

> I think in terms of the institution and the school and the district I work in, this forum has certainly given me a place to rise above them.

Clearly multiple boundaries have been spanned and new territories have been created as a result of this college-school collaborative.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the history of the Windham Partnership, and analyzed four aspects of its effect on boundary spanners. This conclusion will focus on the potential of the partnership to effect change in the professional life of teachers and the preservice preparation of new teachers.

The partnership has become a catalyst for change. It has opened avenues of communication for teachers, made connections that had never

successfully been made, demonstrated that teachers had points of commonality they did not know they had. Teachers found they had a new "stake" in other schools. They had ownership of what they did, teaching had been demystified. The college has provided leverage for the teachers, introduced them to the theory of reflective practice and brought them skills. It has provided the place where connections can be made between elementary and high schools. Teachers have been able to talk about what mattered to them. They have discovered commonalities that have empowered them.

Boundaries were spanned in a number of ways. Teachers became established supervisors at the college. They had the power to pass or fail students. Teachers acquired supervison skills. They had permeated the previously closed boundary of the college.

Teachers also crossed the boundaries between their own schools by observing in other places and actually seeing the places at work. The Partnership enabled them to get a new view of what the other place was like -- as they had never been able to do before.

High school teachers learned from elementary teachres in an unthreatening way, and elementary teachers felt respected for their pedagogoical expertise. There was no competition. It was an enriching experience set up in a non-threatening way. Teachers compared this to their experience on a district-wide assessment committee where teachers felt competitive and powerless. In the partnership they felt a stake in their work together.

Elementary teachers saw their practice reflected back to them through the intern. Isolation in the classroom was eliminated. And elementary teachers appreciated that foreign language, an exciting new subject area, was being added to their classrooms. It was an add-on that took time out of an already jam-packed day. But the benefits outweighed the problem. There was another adult in the classroom, and the teachers were part of a regular collegial group of other faculty that met to discuss practice in a more meaningful way than they had experienced before.

Because the teachers were talking to each other, because they were exploring their own practice in a reflective way they were learning a great deal about teaching.

Members of the partnership had made connections that they would never have made. They found the partnership to be meaningful and

important for their professional growth. Because they felt more secure about their own craft, they came from a more secure place, the likelihood of their exerting their power beyond the partnership became more likely. They had begun to assume leadership in their profession.

They had developed a form of collective leadership. Teachers had developed new expertise and their experience had, in the words of Judith Warren Little, changed "the professional environment of the school" so that the leadership they exhibited became "less a matter of individual career trajectories than...a matter of rigorous professional relations among teachers." (Little, p. 81, 1988.) The teachers had become role models for their interns and colleagues and they began to feel that they had power beyond their the partnership model.

The collaboration with the college had afforded the teachers leverage beyond their schools. It enabled the teachers to redefine their roles and increase their responsibilities beyond the walls of their classrooms without leaving classroom teaching. The Partnership provided teachers with increased visibility and expanded their professional influence and self-confidence, enabling them to aassume "boundary-spanning roles" (Lampert, 1991) that none had previously experienced.

Teachers had engaged in a cross-institutional dialogue where they felt on equal-footing. Teachers had acquired information, data, and understanding about the other institutions that had made them more powerful.

The PDS had established a new sub-culture in the schools that supported risk-taking and valued leadership. It allowed the teachers to circumvent the more traditional school culture that does not reward and often obstructs risk-taking and collaboration.

The teachers are no longer isolated in the "egg-crate schools" (Lortie, 1979, p. 14) The Windham Partnership has provided renewal for veteran teachers, and it has caused them to engage, in the words of Lieberman and Miller, in "continuous inquiry into practice" (Levine, p. 106).

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